



Commemorative Speech of Ricardo Ruiz-Lopez, MD, FIPP

In Memory of a Founder and Past President, David Niv, MD, FIPP at the Occasion of the inauguration of The Marvin and Philippa Pain Center at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be back in my beloved Israel and a pleasure to represent the World Institute of Pain as we remember, celebrate and give thanks for one of its five Founders, our dear Colleague and friend, Professor Doctor David Niv.

We are here to honor his vision, his achievements, and his humanity. This is the man whose courage and determination inspired and united thousands of us around the world in a quest to understand and alleviate pain.

To say that David challenged the accepted medical position on pain is an understatement. He was a warrior, constantly going into battle.

Most, he said, considered it a symptom, like fever – something that would vanish once a correct diagnosis and treatment was determined.

Today his vision is vindicated, and accepted.

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However, it's not that long ago that he was a pioneer, picking up on the initial exploratory work that had been done in the field by equally extraordinary men before him – men like his Mentor and friend Professor Jesmond Birkhahn from Haifa University and others whom he met through his work at Tel Aviv University's Sourasky Medical Center under Professor Mark Chayen.

This is the man who steadfastly, doggedly continued despite those who could not see or share his view that chronic pain was a major disease, an entity in itself.

This is the man who outside of his work at the clinic was the ultimate host. He organized numerous local conferences and educational activities within the framework of the Israel Pain Association, which he helped found in 1985, and which he led as president during the period 1988–1992.

This is also the man who, broadening his reach, put together EFIC's "Declaration" on chronic pain and lobbied leading names in the pain field to endorse it. He then had the document translated into 23 languages and bound into a book for distribution. He became an international leader, an acknowledged expert in the field holding various influential positions over the years: Councilor of International Society for the Study of Pain (IASP), President of the European Federation of IASP Chapters (EFIC), and the Presidency of World Institute of Pain, to name a few.

David was fond of saying: "Few die of pain, but many die in pain, and even more live in pain".

He understood that it was not going to miraculously go away and that it could exist long after its initiating condition was healed. He also saw that of major illnesses like cancer, or cardiovascular disease, which attracted the lion share of attention and funding, pain was by far the most widespread and, the least understood.

Thankfully these days we recognize pain afflicts more people than any other disease as well as being a common element in many of the most prevalent illnesses. We understand a patient may have to bear a double dose of suffering – pain *and* cancer, pain *and* rheumatoid arthritis, pain *and*...

Nowadays research into pain is legitimized and the specialty is accepted all over the world.

I know many of you here will have, like me, worked with David. My collaboration began on August 2, 1987, in Hamburg. We both attended a World Congress of the International Association for the Study of Pain and one of my early mentors, Professor Gerald Aronoff from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, introduced us. Highlights, aside from our enduring friendship, were working alongside him and other foundation members to set up the European Federation of IASP Chapters and the World Institute of Pain in 1993. That was a triumph of cross country collaboration - European as well as Turkey, Israel and Spain, inspired by the Indian-American luminary Professor Prithvi Raj.

One of the best things we can say about pain is that it knows no boundaries! It is a truly universal condition, respecting no one's race, rank, age, gender, or country of origin.

In the last few months of his life David was working on a position paper to raise the profile of Pain Science and Medicine. It called for:

1. Recognition of chronic pain as a major disease entity.
2. The demand that access to pain treatment be considered a human right.
3. Increased awareness among healthcare professionals of the magnitude of the problem, modes of management, and the stage at which a pain patient should be referred to a pain specialist.
4. Encouragement of patients and the public at large to demand better pain relief services.
5. Promotion of education on pain in all medical and paramedical fields.
6. Recognition of Pain Medicine as a professional specialization.
7. Provision of resources for more and better pain services and for the advancement of research on pain.

Just like a child going on a long trip, sitting in the back seat of a car, it's tempting to ask: Are we there yet?

All of us understand the answer has to be No. This is a quest – a journey without end. However we are much further along than we were. This opening of the Marvin and Philippa Carsley Pain Institute is testimony to that, and David, I know, would be so proud and delighted to see it.

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Ten years have passed since his untimely death. It is still hard to express how much all of us miss him. David Niv was so positive and inclusive, so ready to give the best of himself to serve others.

If he were here today he would smile and encourage all of us to go on working hard, for there are few things a doctor does that are more important than relieving pain.

Sometimes, hopefully fleetingly, it can be tempting to see one's accomplishments in isolation. However it's a truth that if we stand tall, we're standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. If we see further, it is because we are standing on the shoulders of giants – giants of spirit, giants of integrity, giants like David for whom we give heartfelt thanks. Our gratitude and admiration for his accomplishments, for the man he was, is ever present in our thoughts.

On behalf of the Executive Board Members and all the Fellows of World Institute of Pain thank you for the invitation to participate in David's commemoration and this inauguration. It's a pleasure, and an honor for which I am deeply grateful. Best wishes for the future. May your achievements in research be of the highest caliber. May your patients return to wellness beyond their, and your, expectations.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Ricardo Ruiz-Lopez, MD, Neurosurgeon, FIPP

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